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## Intonation in the Context of Interlingual and Intercultural Communication

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### Abstract

This paper deals with some questions of description and study of intonation in the languages of different types that are reviewed and generalized from the position of intercultural communication. The following main aspects of intonation are analyzed: phonological, normative, typological, national-specific and culturological. The culturological aspect is positioned as an innovative one in the description of intonation. The problem connected with some distinguished approaches to the intonation research in the teaching foreign languages methods and some recommendations are raised in the paper.

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### 1. Introduction

The acquisition of an intonation standard, which is essential for Russian or any foreign language, is considered to be a complicated and multi-faceted process. While elaborating the main concepts and categories of the modern speech culture we describe and study, first of all, an orthoepic aspect in the sphere of phonetics leaving the intonation aside. We often forget that phrase intonation is one of the most important components of speech in both native and foreign languages.

A lot of papers written by national and foreign scientists were devoted to the problems of intonation study. First

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of all, we should mention the papers written by Reformatskiy A.A., Bryzgunova E.A., Lebedeva Yu.G., Petryankina V.I., Crystal D., Davy D., Gussenhoven C. and others in which a system-structural or phonological approach to the investigation of intonation was worked out in 1960s-1970s. A great contribution to the development of a normative approach on the material of the Russian language was made by Cheremisina N.V., Kodzasov S.V., Svetozarova N.D. They considered the intonation from the position of its normative acceptability in a language. One of the representatives of the phonological approach to the investigation of intonation, Khromov S. (2000), pointed at the dependency of intonation from the type of language and distinguished the grammatical constituent of it, in adequate perception of which the intonation plays an important role. Yi Xu et al. (1997) also confirmed that aspects of intonation vary so much from language to language that ad hoc rules are still commonly used to account for the variations.

Nowadays the search for national-specific and culturological features of intonation is developing. These features allow not only taking into consideration the peculiarities of pronouncing characteristics but studying the intonation as a system of universal, typological and national intonation characteristics. In the paper, an attempt is made to analyze and generalize all the approaches to the investigation of intonation mentioned above in terms of the intonation complex perception application for optimization of foreign language teaching process.

## **2. Methodology: different approaches to the investigation of intonation**

In Russian intonation as well as in Russian phonetics some divergent and simultaneously convergent approaches to the description and investigation of this phenomenon should be mentioned. They are determined by the logic and evolution of linguistics theory and linguodidactics.

1. The first approach is a system-structural or phonological one. It is known that according to traditional phonology the system of intonation differential features description is constructed on the principle of a binary opposition of intonation units (for example, if we take traditional intonation constructions worked out by E.A. Bryzgunova (1978, p. 18-33). Applying this approach we artificially cognitively abstract from so called “excessive” intonological information of both linguistic and extralinguistic view.

The strict opposition, stratification of differential and integral features being realized within the framework of one intonation unit (in other terminology it is called as intoneme, intonation construction) which was characteristic for the initial development of phonology and intonology is considered to be quite relative now (Crystal, 1991). It can be clearly confirmed by experiments with computer-aided simulation of the speech units as a result of which “it remains unclear what features are phonemic and which of them are excessive from the view of classical phonematics, but essential phonetically because they introduce this realization of a speech unit in the orphoepic standard of the national linguistic system” (Rumyantsev, 1990, p. 15).

Any differential feature in the real speech in a vivid certain language is realized within the frame of a pronouncing standard with a definite communicative-pragmatic task, a modal expressive-emotional sense, and a stylistic culturological belonging of the phrase. For example, Crystal and Davy (1973) described the declamatory style of intonation as possessing the following phonostylistic characteristics: loudness varied according to the size of the audience and to the emotional setting; pauses are long especially between the passages, prolonged emphatic pauses are used to underline the emphasis; rhythm is properly organized; common use of low and high falls in final and initial intonation groups and on semantic centres.

2. According to the facts mentioned above, it is necessary to distinguish the second aspect – a normative one. The priority of this approach development is worth giving to Rumyantsev (1999) who in the 1980s showed for the first time how tightly phonetics is connected with phonology and that in this process of communication the phonetic features can be not less, but much more important than phonological ones.

Unfortunately, the narrow understanding of a phrase intonation, considering its components (speech melody, duration, intensity, rhythm and timbre) only according to the frequency of the main tone (i.e. to speech melody) and to the direction of the tone movement is a typical mistake in modern practice of the Russian language teaching.

While working over the intonation in the class, we often abstract the first, phonological aspect of intonation, giving unreasonably much attention to it and considering it as the only important feature in teaching foreign language intonation. In this case we forget that intonation features are bifunctional by their nature: “they form this or that intonation (communicative, modal, emotional, and stylistic) and simultaneously provide its phonetic normative

acceptability in this language” (Rumyantsev, 1990, p. 51).

All these facts speak about the complicated character of differential and integral features interaction, about the wide spectrum of different inflections and variants in passing from one intonation unit to another.

3. The third aspect of intonation is a typological one. According to Zubkova (1997) the significance of intonation parameters is changed depending on the language type and the position of the language on the scale of lexicality/grammaticality. The basic parameter of intonation – speech melody – in particular, the direction of its movement in grammar types of languages is used to express different grammar meanings: for intonation formalization of the utterances, for their communicative types distinction, for the actual articulation expression.

In the languages of lexical types such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Yoruba this parameter is used at the level of the word prosodic organization, and it forms the general tonal contour and identifies lexical meanings. The rest prosodic components – intensity, duration – in the languages of grammar type are mainly connected with the word and considered to be a means of its prosodic organization. In the languages of lexical type these components are associated with a sentence-utterance as a means of motive or estimation expression.

For example, in Russian a general question and a statement are differentiated due to the opposition of rising (rising-falling) and general falling intonation; in Swahili, Arabian and Cicongo – the opposition of rising-falling, rising with falling or twice rising-falling intonation in comparison with general falling intonation in the statement. Basically, this differential feature determines other non-leading features: general frequency range of a phrase, localization of frequency maximum, frequency level (register).

In tonal languages, however, the functional correlation of leading and non-leading frequency characteristics is quite different. The direction of movement for the main tone frequency is not differential in the process of a general question and statement intonation distinction; it means that the phonological status of intonation feature is really changed in terms of the language type and its place at the scale of lexicality/grammaticality. So, for the intonation of general question in such a tonal language as Yoruba, without formal parameters of interrogativeness the same general direction of tone movement as that for a statement is inherent. In accordance with the data of audit analysis, the general questions and statements are identified in Yoruba and Hausa with the height of frequency level and localization of frequency maximum, but not with the direction of tone movement.

Thus, we can see that phonological status of feature in the intonation structure can vary depending on the language type: the leading differential feature in one language becomes an integral one in another language and vice versa.

4. The fourth aspect of intonation study is a search for national-specific features of intonation. Modern Russian speech is a unity of linguistic, sociocultural, psycholinguistic, individual-psychological communicative-functional characteristics from the point of phonetics and intonation. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the change of scientific research vectors occurred: the strict stratification analysis was replaced by the complex, polyfunctional, systematic consideration of phenomena that corresponds to the subject of our study being together the matter of interdisciplinary scientific investigation and complex approach of different branches of science.

Intonation is a multi-layer phenomenon, the unity of universal, typological and national-specific features. In the specification of intonation as a multi-layer phenomenon we base on a hierarchic organization of the language as a form in conception of Humbolt-Zubkova (1999). In the context of intonation investigation in this direction the conception of Nikolaeva (1979, p.219-225) who distinguishes three layers in intonation – the universal layer, the layer of word prosody, and the special layer of the language itself, and the conception of Cheremisina (1999) which includes the prosody of a word, the layer of individual intonation characterizing a person and the layer of stylistic features of intonation. We assume that any intonation contour having a symbolic form of the language manifests the unity of universal, group (genetic, areal and typological ones) and national-specific features of the language. How can the national peculiarities of any intonation be described adequately? The deal is that in many theoretical descriptions of intonation of different Slovenian languages the universal or typological characteristics were often referred to these peculiarities:

- 1) national-specific peculiarities of any intonation, including the Russian one, can be adequately described and determined on the background of its universal and typological properties in the languages possessing different

morphology-syntactic structure. In any intonation a layer of verbal prosody which defines a basic specificity of the intonation is revealed;

- 2) the conglomeration of universal, typological and national intonation characteristics is very specific in every language;
- 3) prosodic construction of the word which correlates with grammar structure of the language being quite various in the languages of the world is considered to be the leading, dominating feature defining the national specificity;
- 4) national specificity of Russian intonation, however, can be described systematically and purposefully only when the intercultural communication is taken into consideration. The determination of national ethnic style of communication is impossible without regarding national specificity of intonation being its essential constituent.

At the same time the experience of international communication shows that the whole traditional picture of differential and integral features interactions, correlation between important and unimportant factors in the process of communication, interaction of a speaker with a listener, establishment/non-establishment of a contact and as a result achievement/failure to achieve the mutual understanding are reconstructed here.

5. Hence it is natural to distinguish the fifth aspect of intonation, namely, a culturological one that is connected with the development of speech culture definition for the methods of foreign language teaching, and also with the full description of communicative national style, the essential part of which is the intonation. From the position of intercultural communication the features which are usually explained as unessential and insignificant ones in the traditional intonology can be considered as very important and necessary features in the process of intercultural communication occurring between the representatives of different culture, of various social, age-related, ethnic groups within one polycultural society, because the success or failure of communication depends namely on them (Gussenhoven, 2002). The culturological approach application at the formation of intonation skills causes some difficulties, first of all, having linguistic character. For example, Russian and English communicative cultures as well as intonation systems of the Russian and English languages don't coincide in both prosodic and intonation aspects. In English the falling stepped and gradually rising scales are dominant in which the stressed syllables are falling in steps or gradually rising to the upper range limit of the voice. In Russian the undulant scale is a basic one in which the stressed syllables "jump up" and the unstressed syllables are pronounced with a low timbre. The terminal tones in English possess an arch structure that distinguishes them from Russian direct tones (Vereninova, 1994).

The difference between intonation systems cannot help creating functional-conceptual differences in intoning utterances and texts. In this respect it is necessary to find a general underpinning for comparison of intonation models and their meaning in different languages in order to applicate the culturological approach and principles of reliance on the native language in the process of intonation skills formation.

### 3. Conclusion

Thus, intonation is one of the most important factors of the language acquisition appropriateness because it is realized within the framework of pronouncing standard with a definite communicative-pragmatic sense, with modal, expressive and emotional mark. This thesis finds its confirmation and development in the range of normative approach. In the process of phonetic peculiarities of the language teaching the intonation cannot be characterized only by a frequency of the main tone or speech melody. It is necessary to take account of a complex character of intonation units for their more precise application in a speech according to the communicative task. Moreover, we cannot forget about using the intonation to express different grammar meanings, and, first of all, for intonation formulation of utterances in definite communicative situations.

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